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TEACHERS NOMINATED FOR PRESIDENTIAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN MATH AND SCIENCE TEACHING

(BOISE) – Three Idaho science and math teachers will be honored Oct. 6 as this year's state nominees for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching (PAEMST).

Darden Sue, Lynnea Shafter and Heidi Bond, all from the West Ada School District, will be recognized during the awards banquet dinner that is part of the Idaho Super Conference for teachers being held at Timberline High School Oct. 6-7. The invitation-only banquet itself will be held Oct. 6 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Bishop's House, 2420 Old Penitentiary Rd., in Boise.

The PAEMST recognition is the nation's highest honor for teachers of mathematics and science. Awardees serve as "models for their colleagues, inspiration to their communities, and leaders in the improvement of mathematics and science education," according to the PAEMST website. Teachers seeking the nomination must submit a lengthy package of materials demonstrating their capabilities in the classroom.

Those selected as state nominees will advance to the national competition where typically one science and one math teacher from each state is named as a winner of the presidential award. The awards vary, one year the selections come from elementary teachers and the next year the selections are made from secondary teachers. This year's nominees are for the elementary cycle.

Darden Sue is a sixth-grade math and World Civilizations teacher at Galileo STEM Academy in the West Ada School District.

She sees herself as providing the foundation for the students to pursue a science, technology, engineer and mathematics (STEM) future. "The students of today have to be able to solve problems that we can't even envision yet," she said. "My goal is to give them strategies to use in a fun, yet challenging, environment."

Sue serves on her school's leadership team, advises the National Junior Honor Society and serves as a mentor teacher.

She has written several grants and piloted a successful math program incorporating technology to help best meet the needs of her students. She has presented at the district and state level her teaching methods and uses for technology in the classroom, has served on several state math committees, and is currently on the board for the Idaho Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Sue also works with the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing.

She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Idaho, and her master's in curriculum and instruction from the University of Long Island.

Lynnea Shafter currently works as a K-5 STEM specialist at Barbara Morgan STEM Academy, a job she's held for three years. Before that, she spent eight years teaching eighth-



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grade physical science in the West Ada School District, although her career originally began in California.

“I teach because I know what a difference it can make in our world,” she said. “After almost 20 years I have evolved in our craft from someone who ‘taught’ by giving information, to one who guides and strategically questions her students to help them explore their world and find the paths for which they are passionate.”

She noted that she also is always a student, learning from others. “It is through collaborations with MEMTA (the Mickelson Exxon Mobile Teacher Academy) Team Idaho, Boise State professors and our school’s staff that I’ve been able to become the teacher I am today and I truly thank them all.”

Heidi Bond has taught second-grade in the West Ada School District for eight years and currently is at Spalding STEM Academy.

“Being named an Idaho State finalist for the PAEMST award is a great honor and showcases the fact that being a teacher of science at the primary level is recognized as having merit and value,” she said. “The greatest honor of all though, is being able to spend each day in a classroom full of students who are eager to learn. Teaching science enables me to provide engaging opportunities for students to connect with the curriculum, ask questions and draw conclusions based on authentic learning experiences.”

For the last three years Bond has participated in ISU’s math and science partnership for educators and was also part of a three-year Developing Mathematical Thinking (DMT) training program provided by a grant from the Micron Corporation. As a result of her work on that, she was asked to help develop the second-grade STEM curriculum adopted by her school.

In 2012, she was named Spalding’s “Teacher of the Year.”

Her skill as a teacher has resulted in her being asked to mentor multiple college students in her classroom. She also has written and received numerous grants and currently serves as the West Ada Education Association building representative, is a Take a Kid On (TKO) mentor, yearbook advisor, and Spalding’s staff committee leader.

She received her education from both BYU Provo and BSU and graduated from Boise State University with a BA in elementary education. She has a K-12 reading endorsement.

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